

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, IS, LEB, XF

SUBJECT: SOUTHERN LEBANON: SAUNDERS/MAYNES MEETING WITH
DINITZ APRIL 14

1. SAUNDERS AND MAYNES CALLED IN AMBASSADOR DINITZ TODAY FOR REVIEW OF SOUTHERN LEBANON SITUATION. PURPOSE WAS TO ESTABLISH WITH EMBASSY HERE FRAMEWORK FOR DIALOGUE IN SUPPORT OF THOSE ALREADY BEING CARRIED ON EFFECTIVELY IN NEW YORK AND JERUSALEM. SAUNDERS BEGAN BY SAYING WE HAVE REACHED "IMPOSSIBLE SITUATION" IN WHICH ISRAEL RELUCTANT TO MAKE WITHDRAWAL COMMITMENT UNTIL AREA SECURE WHILE NEW UNIFIL TROOP CONTRIBUTORS ARE CONDITIONING THEIR EFFORT ON CLEAR-CUT ISRAELI COMMITMENT TO DATE CERTAIN FOR WITHDRAWAL. SAUNDERS SPECIFICALLY DREW DINITZ' ATTENTION TO IRAN'S READINESS TO SEND AT LEAST ONE BATTALION (IN ADDITION TO

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IRANIANS ALREADY ON THE GROUND) IF ISRAEL SETS WITHDRAWAL DATE.

2. TO BREAK THIS IMPASSE, SAUNDERS REPEATED OUR URGING (A) THAT ISRAEL SET APRIL DATE FOR FULL IDF WITHDRAWAL AND (B) THAT U.S. UNDERTAKE MAXIMUM EFFORT IN CONSULTATION WITH UN--BOTH DIPLOMATICALLY AND THROUGH AIRLIFT AND OTHER

PRACTICAL STEPS--TO GET ENOUGH UNIFIL TROOPS INTO SOUTHERN LEBANON TO PUT THEM IN FULL CONTROL OF AREAS ISRAEL

VACATES. TO UNDERLINE OUR BELIEF THAT LATTER IS POSSIBLE, WE GAVE DINITZ DETAILED RUN-DOWN ON PRESENT UNIFIL STATUS AND EXPECTED ARRIVALS. DATA INDICATE QUITE SOLID PROSPECTS THAT UNIFIL STRENGTH COULD BE DEPLOYED AT 4,000 LEVEL (COMBAT PLUS SUPPORT) BY END OF APRIL AND THAT EXTRA 1,400 TROOPS WOULD BE AVAILABLE IF HIGHER FIGURE AUTHORIZED BY SECURITY COUNCIL.

3. SPEAKING FOR HIMSELF, DINITZ EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THIS APPROACH WOULD COMMIT ISRAEL TO WITHDRAWAL BY END APRIL BUT WITHOUT ANY GUARANTEE THAT UNIFIL FORCES BY THEN WOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO PERMIT ISRAELI PULLOUT. SHOULD THIS HAPPEN, DINITZ SAID, EVEN AN IDF DELAY OF A FEW DAYS BEYOND APRIL 30 WOULD LEAD TO AN OUTCRY AGAINST ISRAEL AT UN.

4. DINITZ SUGGESTED A FORMULA THAT WOULD PAIR ISRAELI COMMITMENT TO WITHDRAWAL DATE WITH ACHIEVEMENT OF SPECIFIC UNIFIL FORCE LEVEL BY THE SAME DATE; IF FORCE LEVEL NOT ACHIEVED, ISRAEL COULD THEN ADJUST WITHDRAWAL DATE ACCORDINGLY. THIS FORMULA, DINITZ THOUGHT, WOULD BE WELCOMED BY UNIFIL FORCES WHO, AFTER ALL, DO NOT WANT TO HAVE TO ENTER A VACUUM OR HAVE TO FIGHT AGAINST 'RADICAL ELEMENTS'

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IN SOUTHERN LEBANON.

5. DINITZ TOOK OPPORTUNITY TO REHEARSE HISTORY OF RESOLUTION 425 AND ELABORATE ON HIS VIEW THAT U.S. PUSHED FOR IT WITHOUT GIVING SUFFICIENT ATTENTION TO ISRAELI VIEWS, IN PARTICULAR THE NEED TO LINK IDF WITHDRAWAL WITH ENTRY OF UN FORCES. WHILE U.S. TOOK PAINS, DINITZ SAID, TO ASSURE ISRAEL THAT RESOLUTION AND WALDHEIM'S REPORT COULD WORK TO SATISFY BOTH U.S. AND ISRAELI CONCERNS, ISRAEL IN ALL FRANKNESS WAS NOT, AND IS NOT, HAPPY WITH THIS APPROACH. THIS IS NOT TO SAY, DINITZ EMPHASIZED, THAT ISRAEL WANTS TO STAY IN SOUTH LEBANON. BUT THIS FLAWED PROCESS HAS RESULTED IN UNDUE PRESSURE ON ISRAEL. AMBASSADOR LEWIS, FOR EXAMPLE, IS NOW PRESSING GOI TO ANNOUNCE COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL BY APRIL 30. IN ADDITION, DINITZ SAID, OVERALL ATMOSPHERE OF U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONS ON THIS ISSUE IS NOT HELPFUL. U.S. IS HITTING GOI 'LIKE A TON OF BRICKS' SAYING THAT UNLESS ISRAEL SETS A DATE CERTAIN, SECURITY COUNCIL WILL RECONVENE AND WE MAY FACE SANCTIONS.

6. MAYNES STRESSED THAT REAL DANGER IS NOT SECURITY COUN-

CIL ACTION IN NEW YORK BUT "UNRAVELLING" OF UNIFIL IN LEBANON, AND THAT THIS IS PRIMARY REASON FOR OUR CONVICTION THAT ISRAELI STATEMENT ON WITHDRAWAL IS CRUCIAL. HE

ADDED THAT AMBASSADOR LEWIS HAD NOT PICKED APRIL 30 DATE OUT OF HAT. IF AMBASSADOR DINITZ EXAMINED DATA WE PASSED TO HIM, HE WOULD SEE THAT WITH SCHEDULED APRIL ARRIVALS OF SENEGALESE AND NEPALESE, UNIFIL WILL REACH AUTHORIZED 4,000 LEVEL BY END OF APRIL.

7. SAUNDERS REITERATED OUR CONVICTION THAT, WITH ISRAELI STATEMENT ON WITHDRAWAL, U.S. EFFORT CAN LEAD TO UNIFIL FORCE BY END OF MONTH SUFFICIENT TO PREVENT, ALBEIT NOT PERFECTLY, PALESTINIAN CONCENTRATIONS FROM REFORMING.

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SAUNDERS SAID HE SAW ISRAELI STATEMENT ON WITHDRAWAL BEING COINED IN POSITIVE TERMS AND BUILDING ON BEGIN'S POSITIVE STATEMENT ABOUT UNIFIL TO KNESSET. IN EFFECT, SAUNDERS SAID, WE ARE TRYING TO GET TWO LINES OF ACTION EACH CULMINATING IN THE SAME TARGET DATE, I.E., THE U.S. WILL WORK TO GET MORE UNIFIL FORCES INTO PLAY WHILE ISRAEL WORKS ON WITHDRAWAL. WHEN DINITZ PROPOSED THAT U.S. COULD USE ISRAELI RESISTANCE TO SETTING A DATE AS A LEVER FOR PRESSING TROOP CONTRIBUTORS, SAUNDERS SAID HE WOULD RATHER TELL THE CONTRIBUTORS THEY MUST GET THEIR TROOPS IN PLACE BECAUSE ISRAEL IS COMMITTED TO WITHDRAW AND THEY ARE ESSENTIAL TO STABILITY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. MAYNES THEN SUGGESTED TO DINITZ THAT GOI MIGHT ISSUE STATEMENT ALONG FOLLOWING LINES: "IN LIGHT OF WORD IT HAS RECEIVED REGARDING SCHEDULED ARRIVAL OF UNIFIL TROOPS, THE GOI IS ANNOUNCING ITS INTENTION TO COMPLETE THE WITHDRAWAL OF ISRAELI TROOPS FROM SOUTHERN LEBANON BY APRIL 30." DINITZ SAID HE WOULD REPORT THIS FORMULA TO HIS GOVERNMENT. SAUNDERS ADDED THAT ISRAELI STATEMENT MIGHT CONSIST OF PARAGRAPH DESCRIBING UNIFIL ARRIVALS AND PARAGRAPH ANNOUNCING ISRAELI DEPARTURE. WE AGREED THERE WERE GOOD WAYS AND DANGEROUS WAYS TO MAKE THIS ANNOUNCEMENT AND WE COULD CONSULT ON PRECISE LANGUAGE.

8. DINITZ SAID HE WOULD CONVEY DEPARTMENT'S GENERAL THINKING TO GOI AND THAT WEIZMAN UNDOUBTEDLY WOULD BE TALKING ABOUT PRACTICAL PROBLEMS INVOLVING WITH SIILASVUO. IN MEANTIME HE URGED THAT WE TAKE STEPS TO REIN IN "BLOODHOUNDS" AT UN AS ANY MOVEMENT BY ISRAEL ALONG THESE LINES ONLY MADE MORE DIFFICULT IF APPEARING TO BE DONE UNDER THREAT OF SANCTIONS. CHRISTOPHER

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